



The New York Public Library  
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,  
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

**Thaddeus Drayton collection**

1926-1960

Sc MG 389

Home to Harlem Project funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

## Summary

**Creator:** Drayton, Thaddeus

**Title:** Thaddeus Drayton collection

**Date:** 1926-1960

**Size:** 0.01 linear feet (1 folder)

**Source:** Gift, Drayton, Ethel, December 1987

**Revision History:** This finding aid was updated by Allison Hughes.

**Abstract:** Thaddeus Drayton (1893-1964) together with Rufus Greenlee (1893-1963), pioneered the "class act" tap style, which combined grace and elegance with precision soft-shoe tap dancing. Known as "Drayton and Greenlee," they wore top hats and tails, adding monocles and canes to their costume. They were among the few African Americans to play at the Palace Theater in New York on the vaudeville circuit during World War I. Their act broke up in 1930; Drayton then formed a dance act with Lucille Smith in the 1940s known as "Teddy Drayton and Lucille.". The Thaddeus Drayton collection documents portions of his career as a member of the tap dance team of Drayton and Greenlee (Rufus). Included are letters from W.C. Handy concerning a tribute honoring him and with song lyrics on the reverse (1950-1951), letters from composer/conductor Eva Jessye (1960), and letters from Germany and Russia in 1926. Programs from the Veteran's Camp in Mt. McGregor where Drayton performed in 1950, and from the Negro Actors Guild, mention his name. Of special interest is manuscript music from the Teddy Drayton and Lucille act. There are also song lyrics printed in Italian.

**Preferred citation:** [Item], Thaddeus Drayton collection, Sc MG 389, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

**Language of the Material:** English

**Separated Materials:**

Photographs transferred to Photographs and Prints division.

## Creator History

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## **Scope and Content Note**

The Thaddeus Drayton collection documents portions of his career as a member of the tap dance team of Drayton and Greenlee (Rufus). Included are letters from W.C. Handy concerning a tribute honoring him and with song lyrics on the reverse (1950-1951), letters from composer/conductor Eva Jessye (1960), and letters from Germany and Russia in 1926. Programs from the Veteran's Camp in Mt. McGregor where Drayton performed in 1950, and from the Negro Actors Guild, mention his name. Of special interest is manuscript music from the Teddy Drayton and Lucille act. There are also song lyrics printed in Italian.

## **Key Terms**

### **Subjects**

African American dancers  
African American entertainers  
African Americans in popular culture  
African Americans in the performing arts  
Dancers -- United States  
Tap dancers -- United States  
Tap dancing

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Scores (documents for music)

### **Names**

Drayton, Thaddeus  
Greenlee, Rufus  
Handy, W. C. (William Christopher), 1873-1958  
Jessye, Eva, 1895-1992  
Greenlee and Drayton (Dance company)